A SERMON ON THE PRAYER OF MOSES,

At the xii. Verse of the XC. PSALM.

By *John Stearne*, D. D.

Make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from Day to Day; for suddenly shall the Wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the day of Vengeance. Ecclus. V. 7.

Non exiguum temporis habemus, sed multum perdimus. Satis longa vita, & in Maximarum rerum Consummationem largè data est, si tota bene collocaretur. *Seneca Lib. de Brevitate Vitæ, Cap.* 1.

DUBLIN: Printed by *Joseph Ray* in *Essex-street*, 1695.

SERMON

PRAYER

MOSES.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO HIS

EXCELLENCY HENRY Lord CAPELL,

Baron of *TEWKESBURY*,

Lord *Deputy* General and General *Governour* of the Kingdom of *IRELAND*.

My Lord,

TO the Great Satisfaction of all sincere Protestants in this Kingdom, it hath lately pleased Almighty God, to raise You from a Bed of Sickness: for, tho' Dissolution wou'd have been an unconceivable Happiness to Your Lordship, in freeing You from all those numerous Evils which constantly attend this Mortal State; yet, in Gratitude to Heaven, we cannot but look upon the prolonging of Your Time on Earth, as an exceeding Blessing unto Us; because, a just Reflection on Your Lordship's Exemplary Life, gives Us a fair Prospect of many and good Days under Your Wise & Moderate Government.

When I seriously view Your Lordship, both in a Publick and in a Private Station, I cannot expect that the following Discourse should be very serviceable to Your Lordship, whose hereditary and improv'd Principles of all truly Noble and Vertuous Accomplishments, are an excellent Prepara-

tion

tion for the most surprizing Change of Worlds: Yet, considering how coldly and often very rudely, any sober Discourses of Death and Judgment, are receiv'd by too many in this loose and Atheistical Age, I most humbly beg Leave to present a Plain Sermon, unto Your Lordship's Patronage; which will effectually recommend It, unto the careless World, and prove a sufficient Defence, against all the bold Censures of Vain and Unreasonable Men.

The Religious Conversation of a Prudent Governour will sooner Reform a Court, than all the Arguments and Eloquence of the most Elaborate Sermons; and will more kindly perswade all Inferiours, unto a Life of Vertue, than the severest Laws and Penalties: So that, under Your Lordship's equal Management of Affairs in Church and State, we may, Now, expect to see our languishing Religion, still more and more recover Strength, with Your Lordship; and at length raise Her, too long dejected, Head, above all the Contempt of Open and Secret Enemies. As, therefore, Our fervent Prayers unto that God to whom alone belong the Issues of Life and Death, were offer'd for Your Lordship's Recovery, in the Days of Your prevailing Distemper; so, we must make it our present and constant Request unto the Throne of Heaven, that Your Excellency may be many Years continu'd to Us, both in an Healthful State of Body and in the Prosperous Government of this Kingdom.

Had

Had not the Great Apoſtle exhorted Us, to make Supplications, Prayers and Interceſſions, not only for the King, as Supream, but for all Governours that are ſent by Him, for the Puniſhment of evil Doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well; yet a Natural Concern for our own Darling Intereſt, wou'd ſtrongly engage Us, to plead earneſtly with God, for a Perſon, from whoſe impartial Care and auſpicious Influence, we have the greateſt Reaſon to hope that we ſhall lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty. So conſiderable a Bleſſing is the ſpecial gift of God, who alone can ſtrengthen the Bars of our Gates, and make Peace within the Walls of our Jeruſalem: *and that the ſame God may long employ Your Excellency, as the happy Inſtrument in promoting ſo Great and Good a Work; and (after all the Toil of Life and Government) abundantly reward You, for the Faithful Diſcharge of that important Truſt which is repoſed in You; is the hearty Deſire of,*

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt Humble,

and ſincerely devoted Servant,

John Stearne.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

St. *NICHOLAS* vvithin the Walls.

My Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

BEing often interrupted in the Publick Exercise of my Ministry, by a continuing Indisposition of Body, I think my self oblig'd to consult Your Spiritual Welfare, another Way. And, therefore, that You may have something of Mine, constantly before Your Eyes, to mind You of Your *Latter End*, and to engage You unto all the Great Duties of a Christian Life, I am willing to expose my Self and Sermon to the sharpest Censures of an uncharitable World. And if my Discourse meets with the desir'd Success, in exciting any of You to a Conscientious Improvement of this Uncertain Life, the severest Reflections of Ill Men, will be very patiently undergone, by

Your Faithful Friend,

and Obliged Servant.

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A

SERMON

On Psalm XC. Verse xii.

So teach us (O Lord) to number our days; that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom. *A Prayer of Moses the Man of God.*

WHen we borrow a few quiet Minutes from worldly Business, to enjoy our God and our Selves alone, it must be very astonishing to consider, how Man that is born of a Woman, and *has but a span of days* to live; that has been restor'd by a Glorious Redeemer, and has the comfortable *Hopes* of everlasting Blessedness above, shou'd no more reflect upon the Shortness and Uncertainty of the Present Life, than if It shou'd never End; and make no more Provision for the Life to come, than if It shou'd never Begin. Thô the *King of Terrours* do's hourly enlarge his Conquests over all Sorts & Conditions of Men (who are all made of the same Mold, and must all crumble into the same Dust) thô, this day, One Friend *mournfully* follows another, *to his Long Home*; and when a few Glasses more are run out, others attend him to the like melancholy Lodgings of the Dead; thô, we frequent-

Job 14. 1. *Psal.* 39, 5. 1 *Cor.* 15. 19. *Job* 18. 14. *Eccles.* 12. 5.

ly see some leaving this World, *in their full strength, being wholly at Ease and Quiet, whilst their Brests are full of Milk and their Bones are moist'ned with Marrow*; and 'thô we often see those go first to the Grave, who came last from the Womb; Yet (notwithstanding so many and constant Summons unto serious Thoughts of Death) with what unaccountable Folly, do the Generality of Mankind cheat themselves, out of an Eternity of Bliss, in another World, by their Supine Neglect of a timely Preparation, for their last Hour in this?

Job 21. 23. 24.

Often have I seen careless Persons, on a Dying-Bed, with great Bitterness of Soul, with Horrour and Consternation, reflect upon the Madness of their past Days, that were all bestow'd on Sin and Vanity: and when the Skilful Physician (who seem'd, a while, to put an unwilling Stop to their departing Souls) was, at length, (by the prevailing Symptoms of Dissolution) forc'd into a despair of their Recovery; when their dearest Friends stood round their Beds, pouring out and mixing their Prayers and Tears, in vain; and when they themselves perceiv'd Death creeping on them, gradually taking Possession, and making Its near Approach unto the Seat of Life, in such a doleful helpless state, how often have I heard them with unspeakable Earnestness begg a few such precious Hours, to make their Peace with God, as they had prodigally thrown away upon their Lusts? Under such sad Circumstances how importunately have they apply'd to Heaven, in Words like those of the distressed Psalmist, *O spare me, a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more seen*? But all such late Wishes were in vain; nothing cou'd keep off the deadly stroke. Many Motions of God's Holy Spirit they had oppos'd; many warning Judgments upon

Psal. 39. 13.

on others, they had diſregarded; many private and publick Exhortations they had unprofitably heard; too many Times had they ungratefully turn'd their Backs, on the Bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and, in ſhort, often had they let ſlip the choiceſt Opportunities of *preparing* for their *latter End*; and then, the Juſt and too long provoked God wou'd grant no more. May this never be the diſmal Fate of any Perſon preſent. And that (a ſurprizing death, or rather) our own Inconſideration may not make us miſerable, beyond all Poſſibility of Recovery; but that we may be ſafely directed in our neceſſary *Preparation*, for a dying Hour, let us all (making *Moſes*'s Prayer our own) with a becoming Importunity; and, at leaſt, as conſtantly as day and night return, thus addreſs to Heaven;

So teach us (O Lord) to number our days; that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom. Amen.

Well may we call *Moſes* (not only, as the Title of this Pſalm do's, *The Man*, but) *The Angel of God*; and compare him, to One of thoſe Aſcending and Deſcending Angels in *Jacob*'s Viſion; for, as in other Places we often ſee Him coming down (as it were) unto the People, with important Meſſages from God; ſo, in our Preſent Text, we find him aſcending unto God, with a devout and earneſt Supplication for his People. But why ſhou'd this Faithful Servant to God and Man ſolicite the Throne of Heaven with ſuch a Prayer? Do's He correct himſelf for what he had juſt now deliver'd? Or, had he not given a good Account of Humane Life already, and truly caſt up the Number of its Days, in thoſe his foregoing Words, *The Days of our Age are threeſcore Years and ten; and 'tho men be ſo ſtrong that they,*

Dr. Hammond's Annot. on Rev. Chap. 3 Ver. 20

they come to fourſcore Years (which is not the Lot of one Man among many thouſand) *Yet is their ſtrength then but Labour and Sorrow; ſo ſoon paſſeth It away, and we are gone?* Unto theſe, or the like, demands it will be ſatisfaction enough, to ſay, in a few Words, that it is not a bare Numbring of our Days which is here deſir'd by *Moſes* or God's People; but ſuch a Numbring as includes the juſt Conſideration of their Shortneſs and Uncertainty; with a Religious *Preparation* for that Time when they muſt all determine. So to conſider our Days, and ſo to prepare for their utmoſt Period, is the ſpecial Duty of a Chriſtian; and the faithful diſcharging of our Duty is, in ſundry Places of God's Word, look'd upon and commended, by the Spirit of God, as our trueſt Wiſdom. *To Man ſaid God* (according to the Words of *Job* unto his Friends) *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil is Underſtanding.* And thus ſpeaks the Author of this Pſalm unto the Children of *Iſrael*, *Behold I have taught You Statutes and Judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me: that ye ſhou'd do them in the Land whether ye go to poſſeſs It: keep them, therefore, and do them; for this is Your Wiſdom and Your Underſtanding.* And rightly do's *Moſes* addreſs to God for this Spiritual Wiſdom; for, ſuch *Wiſdom comes from Above*, as the diſtinguiſhing Gift of God, unto his beloved People, God, and God alone, muſt teach us the true beneficial Numbring of our Days; or the Great Leſſon can never be learn'd by Us. So that, if we reaſonably expect to be really Happy in this World, or eternally Bleſſed in another, it muſt highly concern us All, earneſtly and often, to petition God, as his Servant *Moſes* did in our Text; *So teach us (O Lord) to number our days; that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom.* *

Job 28. 28.

Deut. 4. 5, 6.

Jam. 1. 5. & 3. 17.

* *Sim. de Muis Comment. in Locum. Annon Vitæ humanæ Brevitatem noſtrum ingenium ſatis comprehendere poteſt? minimè, ut par eſt, donec Dei Spiritu edocti, cum æternitate, quam ſola fide aſſequimur, illam comparemus.*

And

And in order unto a right Numbring of our Days, let us conſider Four weighty Particulars, *viz.*

Firſt, That our Days (on Earth) cannot be many.

Secondly, That they may be fewer than we expect.

Thirdly, That how few ſoever our Days may be, they are the only ſeaſon in which we muſt provide for Eternity.

And *Laſtly*, That when our few Days are come to an End, our State is unalterably fix'd in Happineſs or Miſery.

When I have ſpoken unto ev'ry one of theſe Particulars, I will briefly, and yet plainly, ſhew,

In the *Second Place*, That this right *Numbring of our Days* is our trueſt *Wiſdom*; becauſe, it makes for our real ſatisfaction upon Earth, and for our much more conſiderable Bleſſedneſs in the everlaſting World. And then,

Laſtly, One uſeful Inference from the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of the preſent Life (and agreeable to the Advice of our *Church*, in her *Rubrick* before the *Communion of the Sick*) ſhall ſerve for a proper Concluſion of the Whole.

Firſt, We are ſo to Number our Days as to conſider that we cannot have many allow'd us to mind the One Thing Neceſſary, the eternal Welfare of our Souls. *Luk.* 10. 42.

L. de Brev. vitæ Cap. 3.

Unto the preſent Generation, may we not aptly propound the ſame Queſtions, which the Ingenious *Seneca* did unto his Friend *Paulinus*? For, how great a Portion of our Time is taken up in the Vanities of Childhood and Youth? How much of our more improved Years, is waſted in taking Thought for our Life and Body, for what we ſhall Eat, what we ſhall Drink, and *Matth* 6. 25. what we ſhall Put on; in a continu'd pampering and adorning thoſe poor Bodies, which after all our Solici- *Job* 1, 21. tude, all our Coſt and Labour, muſt go as naked out of the World, as they came into It, and immediately periſh in the Duſt? Out of the ſmall Remainder how much is ſtol'n for Civil Concerns, for impertinent, cenſorious Viſits, and unprofitable Recreations? Now, deducting from the Number of our Days, as many as are generally ſpent on ſuch Accounts, how little is there of our Time, that we may properly call the Life of a Chriſtian Man?

And 'thô we ſhou'd not confine our Life, unto ſo ſtrict a Notion; but let It be taken, at large, for all the Time that we are to remain here below; Yet even then, (according to that common and Ignoble Acceptation of the Word, Life) it will be found true, that *1 Sam.* 20. 3. ev'ry Man may ſay, as *David* did to *Jonathan*, *there* *Pſal.* 39. 5. *is but a ſtep between Me and Death*; and that a very *Job* 16. 22. ſhort one too; 'tis but a *Span long*: So that, (as *Job* expreſſeth it) *when a few Years are come, I ſhall go the Way, whence I ſhall not return*: When all the Years of my Life, that are, now, contracted into a very narrow Space of Time are ended, I muſt certainly leave this World, ('thô never ſo fond of Its Enjoyments) and ſhall never more return into It. *There is hope of a Tree, if it be cut down, that (thrô the ſent of Water) it will bud,*

bud and ſprout again: but Man dieth and waſteth away; Job 14.7.9.10.
yea, a Man giveth up the Ghoſt, and where is He? No
Man (if the Royal Preacher hath taught us true Do- Eccl. 8.8.
ctrine) *hath Power over the Spirit, to retain It in the*
Day of Death. We may as eaſily ſtop the Chariot of
the Sun (when It riſeth, like a rejoycing Giant, to run Pſal. 19.5.
its Courſe; or when it is poſting unto Night, as if, af-
ter all the Labours of the Day, it were haſt'ning to
give It ſelf, as well as the World, Repoſe) as retard
our departing Souls, or keep in the natural Breath of
Life, when the *appointed Time* of our *great Change* is Job. 14.14.
come. That *all Men muſt die once,* is an *Appointment* Hebr. 9.27.
of Heaven, more *unalterable* than the *Laws of the* Dan. 6.8.
Medes and Perſians, and muſt be ſubmitted to by All.
All Fleſh is Graſs, and all the Goodlineſs thereof is as the Iſai. 4.6.
Flower of the Field: the Graſs withereth, and the Flow-
er Fadeth of it ſelf, if it be not haſtily cut down by the
Sithe of *Death.* In the Apoſtle's Phraſe, our Bodies
are but *Tabernacles*; frail and moveable Frames; not 2 Cor. 5.1.
built for a long Continuance here below: be theſe our
earthly Tabernacles or *Houſes of Clay,* never ſo ſtrong Job 4.19.
and pleaſant, they muſt (after all our conſtant Repara-
tions) ſhortly fall unto the Ground: only *the Houſe not*
made with Hands, is eternal in the Heavens. The Holy
Spirit (as many good Writers have obſerv'd) ſeems Strode.
very deſirous to mind us of this Shortneſs of our Days, Flavel. Swinnock. Downame. Sydenham.
by making uſe of divers Metaphors, to give us a more
compleat deſcription of It. In one Place, our Life is
compar'd to a thin *Miſt* in the Morning, which the Jam. 4.14.
Riſing Sun preſently diſſipates with its conquering
Beams: and in another, to a ſwift *Poſt*; for, ſo do's Job 9.25.
our Life run from Stage to Stage, till wearied Man has
finiſh'd his Journey to his *long Home.* In a third Text, Eccl. 11.5.
our *Breath* is ſaid to be as ſoon extinct as a ſudden

Blaze

Psal. 118. 12. Blaze of dry *Thorns*; which are kindled, crackle, flame and die, almoſt, in the ſame Minute. And, finally, our Life is lik'ned to *Ships at Sea*, which having weigh'd Anchor, continually leſſen the Land, and are quickly out of ſight: So Frail Man having been a little while toſs'd in a tempeſtuous World, *goes hence, and is no more ſeen.* And how (as a late Tranſlator of *Seneca's* 8*th. Chap. de Brevitate Vitæ*, words it) canſt thou ſay he hath ſailed much, whom a cruel Tempeſt takes immediately, as ſoon as he is off the Haven's Mouth; and after many churliſh Aſſaults of Wind and Billows, much traverſing his Way, and various ſeen and ſecret Dangers, at length drives back the ſame Road, by which He lately went out? Surely, we cannot ſo properly ſay, this Man hath ſail'd far, as that he hath been much toſs'd and beaten. And (to borrow, at once, from *Virgil* and *Seneca*) As, when we are on the Seas, the Shores and Cities ſeem to flie from Us; ſo, in the ſwift courſe of Time, we firſt loſe the ſight of our Childhood, then of our Youth, and at length diſcover the Straits of Old Age, at which whether we ſhall arrive, or no, is very doubtful. Thus You have ſeen how remarkably and aptly the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of our mortal ſtate is ſet forth, both in Profane and Sacred Writings. And indeed it is obvious unto Daily Obſervation. Do we not hourly ſee that High and Low Rich and Poor, one with another, deſcend alike into the impartial Grave? In the undiſturb'd Chambers of That *Houſe* (*appointed for all the Living*) lies the Richeſt Monarch and the pooreſt Begger; the One unenvi'd, and the other not deſpis'd. *All men have one Entrance into Life, and the like Going out.* Even Kings, tho' like *Gods* on Earth, they can reſtore that Life which the Laws have taken away, *ſhall die like other Men.*

Job 9. 26. *Per ſingulos fluctus ætatis noſtræ momenta minuuntur, S. Hieron.*

Eſt mare quoddam, hæc vita: fluctus in ea aſſidui, ſæpe Tempeſtates. Juſ. Lipſ. Ep.

Æneï. L. 3. ---Terræq; urbeſq; recedunt. Epiſt. 71. ad Lucilium. Curſu rapidiſſimi Temporis, &c.

Job 30. 23.

Pſal. 82. 6, 7.

Wiſd 7. 6. *Ignotos extremo dies inſignibus æquat. Rem. Cardinalis Barberini.*

Death

Death levels All, from *him that ſitteth on a Throne of Glory, unto him that is humbled in Earth and Aſhes: from him that weareth Purple and a Crown, unto him that is clothed with a Linen Frock*, Ecclus 40. 3, 4. We muſt be both very inconſiderate and ungrateful, if we have already forgotten how *Death has* lately (in the Prophets way of ſpeaking) *entred into our Palaces*; and taken away that *Excellent Princeſs* who was our *Glory*, our *Joy*, and our *Defence*. The greateſt Perfection in this World will not defend from the ſtroke of Death. Had the *Church of Rome* ſo perfect a *Saint*, with what expenſive Offerings wou'd Religious Pilgrims flock unto her Tomb! And, if there be a Treaſury in that Church, how many might have gon on in ſinning upon the Vaſt Stock of Her Merits! But, She is gon Hence, and will be no more ſeen amongſt us; either to ſhame us into a Vertuous Converſation, by Her Royal Example, or to ſuppreſs the bold Impieties of our Age, by Her Authority. If the Wiſhes of *Great Britain*, and as *Ireland* (or our *Iſrael*) may now ſay (*Si mea cum veſtris valuiſſent Vota Britanni*) if mine, with all the joynt-Prayers of the *Britiſh Nation*, cou'd have prevail'd with God, for the prolonging of Her Life, we ſhou'd, this Day, have enjoyed Her, unto our Comfort, whom Death has taken from us to our ſorrow. O ye Sons and Daughters of Men! who are now ſo Young and Lovely, ſo nobly deſcended and inveſted with Power and Honour, ſo attended with Servants, lodg'd in ſumptuous Palaces and ſurrounded with all the ſenſible Contents of Life, that You flatter Your ſelves in Your Heaven upon Earth; ſee, ſee in the ſudden fall of our mighty *QUEEN*, what prodigious Folly

Jer. 9. 22.

Q. Mary II. died December the 28th, 1694. at Kenſington.

Pool's Dialogue between a Popiſh Prieſt and an Engliſh Proteſtant.

Ep. Gauden's Funerals made Cordials, &c.

it is, for You to grow proud of any thing you enjoy here below, or to truſt in your own moſt uncertain Lives. Surely you cannot deſire a fuller Inſtance to conſute all the Hopes and Confidences of poor Mortals; who are All, at their *beſt Eſtate*, from the Cottage to the Throne, *altogether Vanity*. If Greatneſs of Honour and Extraction; If Youth and Beauty; if the brighteſt Glories and moſt envied Pleaſures of a Court; if the moſt Loving and Tender Huſband, and even a *Praying People*; if any or all of theſe deſireable Things cou'd have preſerv'd *Her* precious Life, our endeared *Princeſs* had not now been the Melancholy ſubject of my Diſcourſe and your Attention. But, She *of whom the World was not worthy*, is tranſlated from us unto a fitter Place. And ſo remarkable an *Inſtance*, muſt be unto Us all, more than a ſufficient Proof of *Humane Frailty*. I ſhall not therefore ſtay longer on that Point: eſpecially, becauſe there are ſeveral propounded Particulars remaining yet untouch'd: One of which, as it was laid down,

Pſal. 39. 5.

Heb. 11. 38.

In the *Second Place*, is, That our Days (on Earth) may be fewer than we expect.

'Tis no ſmall Part of the Vanity of Man that he inconſiderately defers his work of *Preparation* for a better Life, upon the groundleſs Expectation of having, hereafter, a *convenient ſeaſon* to perform It. And yet when the careleſs Creature has given his Soul full liberty, *to take its Eaſe, to eat, drink, and be merry*, (as if he were reſolv'd to conſume, upon himſelf, all the *Good Things* which he *has laid up for many Years*) how often

Luk. 12. 19. 20.

often do we ſee the juſt God, that *very night* of unreſtrain'd, ſenſual ſatisfactions, *require his* miſerable *Soul of him*? And then he is ſo far from enjoying, that *he cannot tell who ſhall gather all his Heaps of Riches*, Pſal 39 6. then all his hopes of Happineſs, in both Worlds, periſh with him. 'Tis well if ſome unhappy Soul's have not been tormented in Hell Flames, long before that time came unto which, in their Heat of Youth and Pride of ſtrength, they put off all ſerious Thoughts of their latter End. And may not the Souls and Bodies of ſome before me now, part within a few Days? may not thoſe cloſe Companions, in all the works of the Devil, be ſoon divided between the Grave and Hell? May not the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth ſummon the moſt healthy of us all, to give an Account of our Stewardſhip, at his impartial *Tribunal*, before the next opportunity of aſſembling in this *Holy Houſe*? How little reaſon then have we to defer a neceſſary Preparation, for the uncertain Time of our moſt certain Change, which may be much nearer than we imagine? Safely therefore, did the learned *Rabbi* adviſe his Scholar, *to Repent one Day before he Died*; enjoining him thereby, to repent ev'ry Day of his Life; becauſe he cou'd not aſſuredly ſay of any One, but that it might be the Day of his Death. How many have awak'd out of their *beloved Sleep*, with a refreſh'd and chearful Countenance, whoſe Faces have been cover'd with the gaſtly Paleneſs of Death, before the Night approach'd? And how many have laid themſelves down on their eaſie Beds, and never riſen but to appear before the dreadful Judgment-Seat of that Almighty God whom they boldly affronted, in all

all their Years of Health and Pleasure? Surely then we cannot think that the *present Day* is too *early* to prepare for another World, when we consider that *to Morrow* may be *too late*. For, 'thô the Life of Man, in general, be *threescore Years and ten, and 'thô some may so be strong as to come to fourscore Years*, yet no Particular Person can be assur'd that He shall reach the neareſt of those Periods. The Book of Life, in which all our Days are Numbred, is not legible by us. God, with as much Kindness as Wisdom conceals the Time of our dissolution that we may live in a constant Preparation for our most sudden Change. And yet, how prepar'd soever (according to God's Expectation) some Persons may be, for the sad Hour of their Departure; this, I conceive may very truly be affirm'd, that the far greater Part of mankind leave this World, much sooner then they expect; and more die before Ten then after Threescore. How many have plac'd their Hopes of being long remembred in a numerous Posterity; and yet have they not liv'd to see all that descended from them laid down *in the place where all things are forgotten?* So uncertain and deceitful are the common Hopes of a longer Abode on Earth, that the World do's, almost ev'ry day, supply us with fresh Instances of thoughtful and projecting Men, who are hastily taken away from all their big Designs and mighty Undertakings; and, in the quiet Grave, rest from all their fruitless Labours. What great and good Designs (far above the most lofty Flights of Panegyrick) had the *Most Reverend Tillotson* laid, for the Advancement of Piety in coming Generations? But Death has put an End to All the Church

mght

Ad hoc conditor noſter latere voluit finem noſtrum, diemq; noſtræ mortis eſſe incognitum, ut dum ſemper ignoratur, ſemper proximus eſſe credatur, Grego.

Pſal. 88. 12.

Hæc eſt TILLOTSONI *Gloria, ut nullius Laudibus creſcat, nullius vituperatione minuatur. Macrobius de Marone.*

John, Lord Archbiſhop of Canterbury died November 22*d.* 1694.

might juſtly have expected, from One ſo great as well in all * Spiritual and Artificial Abilities, as in the Royal Favour. And have we not a more convincing Proof, of Man's uncertain ſtate, nearer Home, in the more unexpected Fall of a moſt Worthy Biſhop? How ſoon was he tranſlated from the *Biſhoprick of Down*, to the undiſturb'd Poſſeſſion of a *better Country*? And yet, if we Number his Days, by his Wiſdom, we may properly enough ſay, that he liv'd many more Years in the World, than Nature gave Him He duly conſider'd how ſwiftly Time runs on; and his Improvement of It was, in ſpeed, anſwerable to Its motion. He liv'd faſt in the beſt ſenſe; ſo faſt, that He, very early, came, almoſt at once, to the End both of a deſerving Clergy-man and a good Chriſtian, A Biſhoprick and Heaven. And now, *Our Fathers, where are they? and our Prophets, do they live for ever?* They are no more in this world; but they live, for ever, among the Bleſſed. And where is the late *Nurſing Mother of our Church?* Surely, it is Her Happineſs, above, to enjoy the Society of thoſe *Juſt Men*, whom Her Prudent Care for Religion promoted here below. How ſurprizingly was that Incomparable *QUEEN* call'd off, when three Nations flatter'd themſelves with the great Hopes of ſeeing her act a long and glorious Part, on the Publick Stage of this World; to the Honour of her God, the Settlement of his true Religion, and the general Satisfaction of all good men? We muſt bleſs God for that bright Pattern of all Chriſtian Vertues which She has left to future Ages; and which the preſent Generation do's more commend than imitate: but we can expect no more from Her: She is gone to the Joys above,

* *Bp. Wilkins's diſtinction in his Eccleſiaſtes.*

Hebr. 11. 16.

Dr. Samuel FOLEY *died May* 22*d*, 1695. *Annis immaturus ſed grandis Scientiâ: Venerabilis morum Senectute & canus Prudentiâ. Mel. Adam. de vitâ & Obitu. G. Whitakeri.*

Zech. 1. 5.

Iſa. 49 23.

above, and left us in the midst of all our transporting Expectations, unto Tears and Mourning in this Vale of Misery. The loss of such a *Queen* wou'd have commanded our Tears at any Time, 'thô she had sate the Years of our ever renown'd *Elizabeth*, on the *Throne*, and had resign'd Three Kingdoms, to her Successour in the most perfect Peace: but, it must double our Concern to consider, that the darkness of the Grave has hid Her Face, from us, in a *needful Time of Trouble*. So that ev'ry true hearted Protestant may, say of Her hasty Dissolution (as *Philip* did of his Friend's) *It was in a good time for Her self, but for Me too soon. How is the mighty Princess fal'n! How are the Angels of our Church perish'd!* And 'thô We flatter our selves, as much as we can, with the Thoughts of doing great Things, either for our selves or others, in the future Years of our Life, yet it is most certain, that we are already dead, to all the past Portions of our Time; what are yet to come (if God allows us any more) with a swift Pace, following those that are gone before, will be quickly past too; and only the present *Now is Ours*. And so important is this very Moment, that upon the right Improvement of it, may depend all the Happiness of our Souls and Bodies, in a better World. For, as You were told,

Mors Spernit altam Gloriam. Involvit humile pariter & celsum Caput. Ubi nunc fidelis ossa Fabricii manent: Quid Brutus aut rigidus Cato? Boet. de Conso. Phil. L. 2do.

In the *Third Place*, How few soever our Days on Earth may be, they are the only season, in which we must provide for a blessed Eternity.

Now, *is the accepted Time*; Now, is the Day of Salvation. When the Night of Death o'retakes us, this Day of Grace is at an End: Time it self will be no more,

more, and Repentance will be too late. So that, *in this our Day we muſt know* (that is, not only underſtand but alſo practiſe) *the Things which belong unto our eternal Peace, or they will be, for ever, hid from our Eyes.* The ſame ſtroke of Death, which divides the careleſs Wretche's Soul and Body, ſeparates both, from all Opportunities of making his Peace with God, or ſecuring his everlaſting Welfare. When we have left this World, with a guilty and tormenting Conſcience, all the mercenary Prayers of others, with all the religious Performances of our moſt real Friends cannot, in the leaſt degree, promote our Happineſs. Men may, in an affected Ignorance or a licentious Neglect, delay their preparatory work on earth, to the very lateſt Minute; and ſtill depend upon the Treaſury of the Romiſh Church, in which (if her celebrated Writers ſay nothing but Truth) they that are not poor can hardly be Damn'd; but the Word of God, is ſo far from giving them any Encouragement, in ſuch an uſeleſs Dependance, that (leſt they ſhou'd loſe their Souls and their Money together) It ſtrictly commands them to *work out*, in their own Perſons, their *own Salvation*, whilſt they have the Light of Life; for, when *the night of Death comes, no Man can work.* And our Church (not impoſing Articles of Faith, that are juſtifiable only by fabulous Legends and ridiculous Stories, of Souls appearing, after Death, to implore the Aſſiſtance of ſurviving Friends, towards a Diſcharge from the pains of Purgatory, but) raiſing her Doctrine on the Word of God, as the moſt firm and laſting Foundation, do's, with a pious Concern for the Spiritual Good of her Children, thus deliver her Thoughts unto them, on this very Point; "Let "not

Luk. 19. 42.

Conc. Tridentinum decretum de Purgatorio.

Phil. 2. 12.

John 9. 4.

Mr. Rawlet's Dialogue. Chap. 6th. P. 1.

The Homilie of Prayer, 3d part.

" not us dream any more that the Souls of the Dead " are any thing at all holpen by our Prayers: but let " us think, that the Soul of Man passing out of the " Body, goeth straight ways either to Heaven or to " Hell; whereof the One needeth no Prayer, the O- " ther is without Redemption. The only Purgato- " ry wherein we must trust to be sav'd, is, the Bloud " of Christ: he that cannot be sav'd by Faith in That, " how shall he look to be deliver'd by Man's Inter- cessions? Instead, therefore, of building any deceit- ful Expectation on the Prayers or Gifts, of such as may think they have enough both of Money and good Works, for themselves and their neighbours, let us sin- cerely practise that safe Doctrine which is maintain'd in the Prayers, Homilies, Articles and Canons of that Church of which we profess our selves Members: We must timely prepare for our eternal State, by *wisely Numbring our Days* now, or let that *great Work alone for ever*: for, *there is no Work, nor Wisdom, nor Know- ledge in the Grave, whither we are all going*; some in a more speedy and some in a slower Pace; *every Man in his own Order*, as the Sovereign Lord of Life and Death, is pleas'd to call. And therefore, as I pro- pounded It,

Eccl. 9. 10

In the *Fourth Place*, When our few Days are come to an End, our State (either in Happiness or in Misery) is unalterable.

If thrô the Inconsideration of our own transitory and uncertain Lives, we Die in our Sins, and lift up our Eyes in Hell; in the tormenting Flames, we may long, and long in vain cry out, *Father* Abraham, *have mercy*

Luk. 16. 23, 24. 26.

mercy on me; for between Us and Him, there is a great Gulf fix'd; ſo that they which wou'd paſs from Heaven to Hell, cannot; neither can they paſs to Heaven that wou'd come from Hell. By the *Gulf fix'd* between Heaven and Hell is meant (ſay many learned Writers) God's *irreverſible Decree*, by which thoſe Perſons whoſe Wickedneſſes made them incapable of the Viſion and Enjoyment of God, and ſunk them down to Hell, ſhall for ever remain there without any Hopes of Comfort or Relief: and by which the Righteous ſhall be receiv'd into Life everlaſting; into ſuch Happineſs as all the Powers of Hell ſhall never be able to leſſen or diſturb. At the Diſſolution of this Whole Frame of Nature, the Officious Angels ſhall ſound to Judgment, call up the Dead, and gather their ſcatter'd Aſhes, whereſoever the four Winds have lodg'd them: but ev'ry departed Soul comes to its particular Judgment, immediately after It has done with this miſerable World; and is for ever confirm'd in a Condition of Joy or Sorrow. And doubtleſs, as it greatly improves the heavenly Joys of ſuch as die in the Lord, to be aſſur'd that all the Bleſſings, with which God mercifully rewards their holy Lives, ſhall laſt as long as God himſelf; ſo, on the other ſide, it muſt ſtrangely aggravate the miſeries of the damn'd, to know, that they are plac'd in a ſad Eternity where they ſhall hate to live and yet can never die. After they have lain Millions of Ages under the moſt unexpreſſible Torments, they ſhall not diſcover one happy Minute wherein they ſhall outlive their Pains; but ſhall ſtill look forward, into more and more Wrath to come. Such an uncomfortable Proſpect creates their Deſpair, and ſuch Deſpair is the Emphaſis of all their Torments. *So teach us, therefore, O*

Dr. Hammond, and Mr. Bragg on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Hell is called the Deep and the Bottomleſs Pit, becauſe the Wicked being caſt, with their hands and feet bound, into Hell, can never come out.

Dr. Ham. on Luk. 8. 31. and Mr. Horne on the ſame.

Matt. 24. 31. 1 Theſ. 4. 16. Hebr. 9 27.

Mark 9. 24. Rev. 20. 10. 12. 5. Job 27. 8.

Lord, to Number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom; and not, as Fools, for *the Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a ſeaſon*, expoſe our Souls and Bodies unto Miſeries of eternal Duration.

Heb. 11. 25.

Who w'd be a King for an hour, and a Beggar all the after days of his Life? and who wou'd live in Fullity here for an hour, and burn in Hell, World without End? Dr. W. Jones. in Locum.

Having thus diſtinctly ſpoken unto the *four* propounded *Particulars*, which we are to conſider, in order to a right Numbring of our Days, I am now to ſhew,

In the *Second Place*, That ſuch a Numbring of our Days, is our trueſt Wiſdom, becauſe it makes for our real Satisfaction in this World, and for our endleſs Felicity in the next.

The Truth of this Reaſon appears, from the Conſideration of that mighty Influence, which ſuch a Numbring of our Days has upon our Souls, in freeing them from their uneaſie, reſtleſs Paſſions; Pride, Murmuring, Ambition, Revenge and the like; or, at leaſt, in reſtraining all thoſe extravagant Deſires of Earthly Things, which make us *conſume our Days in Vanity, and our Years in Trouble.* So juſt a Senſe of that prevailing Power which a ſerious Meditation upon Death has over the whole Life of Man, had the Old Egyptians, that they preſented a Scull, at their moſt ſplendid Entertainments, to keep all Beholders within the due Bounds of Temperance. Such a ſober Practice ſeems to be favour'd very much by that bold and yet true ſaying of the Learned *Picus* Earl of *Mirandula, Let a man ſeriouſly think of his dying Hour, and then let him ſin if he can*; and by that pertinent Advice of the Wiſe *Son* of *Sirach*, *Whatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs.* Let a man but ſeriouſly meditate how ſoon

L. 2. *de Morte, &c. Noſtræ inſtantis diſſolutionis obvio ferè omnium malorum oſt cauſa.*

Eccluſ. 7. 36.

ſoon He and all things elſe may change; or how ſuddenly he may be forc'd to part with the deareſt Objects of his Love (which binds faſter than the Hands of a Prieſt) and ſuch a cloſe Thought will naturally quench his hoteſt Paſſion for the enſnaring Vanities of this World. Such a compoſed Meditation wou'd ſoon check our fooliſh Hopes, and ſpoil the Reliſh of all our carnal Joy: It wou'd, in our Opinion, blaſt the moſt tempting Beauty, and darken the brighteſt Luſtre of worldly Greatneſs: In a word, it wou'd effectually aſſiſt us in overcoming our moſt deſtructive ſpiritual Enemies; even all thoſe *fleſhly Luſts which* conſtantly and, too often, very ſucceſsfully *War againſt the Soul.* For (to inſtance in ſome of them) how can that Perſon ſwell, or look big with Pride, who duly employs his Thoughts upon that Time when Death (which is no Reſpecter of Perſons) ſhall humble him unto the Duſt, and level him with the meaneſt Mortal? How can we diſtract our Spirits, in the eager Proſecution of any temporal Things (as if we were to live an Eternity here below) when we conſider that *we are ſtrangers and ſojourners upon Earth, as all our Fathers were*; and muſt, when a few Days are over, leave all to the next coming Travellers? How unſuitable will the long Projects of vain Glory, appear unto ſuch as in earneſt think with themſelves what a little Hole in the Earth, muſt, at laſt (after all his Graſping) contain that man's Body, whoſe Soul the Wide World cou'd not content? Muſt not all men impartially condemn themſelves, as very vain and inconſiderate Creatures, for waſting their Time and Strength, and compaſſing Sea and Land, to *heap up Riches or lay up Goods, for many Years*; if they really believe that they are but

1 *Pet.* 2. 11.

Pſal. 39. 12.

Rara ſi conſtat ſua Fortuna mundo: ſi tanta varias vices.

Crede Fortunis hominum caducis; Bonis crede fugacibus. *Boet. de Conſo: Philoſ. L.* 2*d. metro tertio.*

but of *Yesterday*, and may be no more *to morrow*? And how will it clog and press down the most Aspiring Soul, to consider, that he has the airy Applause of a flattering Croud, one Day, and may be tumbled down from his highest Pinacle of Glory, whether in Church or State, into the very Grave, and there, be scornfully trampled on, the next?

I must not insist longer upon Particulars; in general, therefore, I say, that the just Improvement of this One Supposition, that (our Minutes flying fast away) we may soon lie down in the Dust, wou'd wonderfully contribute to the Quiet and Satisfaction of our Minds, under all the various Changes and Chances of this mortal Life; and wou'd forward us, very much, in a Conscientious Discharge of all Christian Duties; as St. *Peter* thought himself oblig'd to double his Care in the Apostolick Office, because he was *shortly to put off his earthly Tabernacle*. The consideration of our momentary and still doubtful Abode in this lower World, do's not only befriend and assist us in the Time of Health, but also, render the Thoughts of Death it self easy to us, when we are brought unto a Bed of Sickness. Familiarity, in many Cases, abates the Horrour that commonly attends them: and if we accustom our selves unto an holy Meditation upon Death, we shall, by degrees, learn to bear well the concluding Stroke. How dismaying (as many have observ'd) is a pitch'd Battel to One that never saw the terrible Countenance of an Advance, or the Dreadful Solemnity of War? But how unconcern'd is an Old Soldier at all the thundering Shouts of engaging Armies, and the Groans of dying Men, on every side? That our Hearts there-

2 *Pet.* 1. 13, 14.

fore,

fore, may not ſtart at the firſt View of Death, let it be our Wiſdom frequently to meditate on the Time, when that King of Terrours will make his cloſe Approaches to us. Every Night, as conſtantly as we unclothe, we have a fit Occaſion to conſider, that ſhortly we muſt ſtrip nearer; and put off not our Garments only, but our very Fleſh that wears them. Our burning Lights ſuggeſt unto us many and uſeful Thoughts of the Waſting of our Days; The Darkneſs of Night ſhou'd mind us of the uncomfortable Shadows of Death; and Lying down in our Beds, of reſting in the Grave, when the Great Working-day of Life is ended. In a word, The Art of dying in the Lord is a Chriſtian's peculiar Leſſon; and if we often practiſe It in our healthful Days, we ſhall be found ready, when our Great Maſter call's Us, to repeat It, and be well prepar'd to enter into his Joy. But no man (according to the Judgment of St. *Cyprian*) can reaſonably look for any comfortable Aſſiſtance againſt the Terrors of approaching Death, who has not meditated upon his own Mortality in the Time of Health.

Job 18. 14.

Ep. 52. *Nec dignus eſt in morte accipere ſolatium, qui ſe non cogitavit eſſe moriturum.*

From what has been deliver'd it is evident that ſober Thoughts of our ſhort & uncertain ſtay on Earth, wou'd greatly promote our Happineſs in both Worlds; by weaning our Souls from all the Follies of Life, and by minding us of an early and conſtant Practice of all Religious Duties; and more particularly of Receiving frequently the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And now I muſt haſten unto a more diſtinct Conſideration of that Weighty Part of our Religion, becauſe I promis'd to enlarge.

In the *Third and Laſt Place*, on One uſeful Inference from the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of the preſent Life; relat-

Rub. to the Communion of the Sick.

relating unto the Lord's Supper, which I shall give you almost, in the Words of our Church.

" Forasmuch as all mortal Men be subject to many " sudden Perils, Diseases & Sicknesses, and ever uncertain " what time they shall depart out of this Life; therefore, " to the Intent they may be always in a readiness to die " whensoever it shall please Almighty God to call them, " let them often receive the Holy Communion of the Bo- " dy and Bloud of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be " publickly administred in the Church; that so doing " they may in Case of sudden Visitation, have the less " Cause to be disquieted for lack of the same.

Tert. de Spect. Cap. 1. Expe- ditum mortis Genus.

It was once the Commendable Character of Christi- ans, that they were *a People prepar'd for Death.* But in our inconsiderate Age, how few are there of that vast Multitude of Men, who strongly pretend to Christiani- ty, unto whom so great a Character may justly be- long? How many but begin the most important Work of Preparation, when their Lives draw near unto their End; never earnestly resolving upon doing Good, till the best Opportunity for it be past. How many have spent Thirty, Forty, or perhaps Fifty Years in the World, and yet, in all that space of Time have not made so much Preparation, for the uncertain Hour of Death, as one single Act of Receiving the Blessed Sacra- ment of the Lord's Supper? As if they design'd, by Receiving on a sick Bed, to *shew forth* not *the Lord's Death*, but their own; and thought it sufficient to Imi- tate their Lord, by taking the Sacramental Bread and Wine, in the same Night that they are deliver'd unto Death. O most prodigious Ingratitude! after all the Mercies which God hath, lately, vouchsaf'd unto our Land;

The constant Communicant.

Land; to the Inhabitants of this City in a more ſpecial manner (which certainly ſhou'd more ſtrictly oblige them unto a Chriſtian Life) after all God's wonderful repeated Favours, I ſay, 'tis unaccountable, how ſuch, as in other Matters, might paſs for Men of Good Senſe and Reaſon, ſhou'd ſtill continue ſo unreform'd as to mind the Holy Sacrament, no more, than if they had never known the Great Neceſſity of Receiving It, either from the Bible or the Pulpit. If ever, from a ſick Bed, they look back upon their careleſs Lives, it muſt cauſe an extream Anguiſh of Spirit to conſider in how many Sermons, they have been, in vain, exhorted to prepare, at once, for the Sacrament and Death; and how many Communion-Sundays they have ſeen the Holy Table, and all things ready, but themſelves. And it is hardly to be expected that God, upon a Day's, perhaps but an Hour's ſorrow, ſhou'd be reconcil'd unto them, after ſo baſe and unworthy a Neglect, for many Years. No perſon, who, in a Chriſtian Church, has frequent Opportunities of Communicating, and yet lives in a general Neglect of the Lord's Supper, can, without a very ſevere and extraordinary Repentance, hope to be ſav'd. And why ſhou'd Men act ſo unlike themſelves, ſo unlike rational Creatures, as to perſevere in a conſtant Contempt of that Great Duty, for ſlighting of which, they muſt be at laſt, either ſo deeply and heavily concern'd in this World, or eternally miſerable in the next? upon what Account any ſuch Perſons can expect, that their Prayers, in this Holy Houſe, ſhou'd be graciouſly heard by that God, whom they ſo openly undervalue; or that he ſhou'd give a Bleſſing to any thing they undertake, I cannot as yet conceive. But ſure I am, that the common Neglect of the Lords Supper, in this populous City, is a Sin of ſo provoking a Nature, that ſhou'd God, only lay it in Aſhes,

or

or give it into the Hands of a revengeful, bloudy Enemy, it would be a more favourable Judgment, than such an unchristian Practice do's deserve. Were it not for some that keep up the Life of Christianity amongst us, by a *Monthly Communion*, we might immediately look for the heaviest Plagues: but it is to be hoped, that God, in his unbounded *Mercy*, will *spare a City, for the few Righteous that are therein*. To conclude all, therefore, my Heart's desire unto God, is, that any or all of these Considerations may perfectly awaken You, out of your dangerous Security; and engage you unto a timely Improvement of Your few, uncertain Days on Earth. God has frequently by his Mercies, by his Judgments, and by his Ministers, warn'd You to prepare for Your Latter End; this very Hour, once more he calls you, unto a just Consideration of It: and with such as obstinately slight his present gracious Invitation, he may be so highly displeased, as not to allow them any such future Favour. This Moment therefore, against all Temptations to delay, resolve as a Wise Man did before You: *I will Reform to Day, and leave to Morrow unto God*, for, is it not a most hazardous Act of Folly, to go on one Minute in that Course of Life, in which ev'ry Wise Man must be unwilling or afraid to Die? Now, therefore (as *Jotham*, from the Top of Mount *Gerizim*, lifted up his Voice and said unto the Men of *Shechem*, so do I, from this Place, humbly and earnestly address to You) *Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto You*: obediently hearken unto me, in this Day of Your Life and Health; that God may graciously hearken unto you, *in all Time of your Tribulation; in all Time of your Sickness; in the Hour of Death; and in the Day of Judgment*.

Gen. 18. 23. 24.

St. August. J. F. Pic. Mirandula.

Judg. 9. 7.

FINIS.

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